

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 300925

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IR, MR, XF, MOPS

SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM
IRAN

REF: A) TEHRAN 11045 B) AMMAN 9165 C) STATE 298120 NOTAL

1. ACCELERATED POLISARIO (ALGERIAN-SUPPORTED WESTERN
SAHARA LIBERATION MOVEMENT) CAMPAIGN IN RECENT MONTHS
AGAINST KEY ECONOMIC TARGETS IN MAURITANIA PROPER HAS DIS-
RUPTED IRON ORE EXPORTS (WHICH PROVIDE ABOUT 80 PERCENT
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OF MAURITANIA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS). LATE OCTOBER
POLISARIO KIDNAPPING IN MAURITANIA OF TWO MORE FRENCH
CITIZENS (FOR TOTAL OF EIGHT IN POLISARIO HANDS) WORKING AS
IRON ORE RAILWAY TECHNICIANS FURTHER HEIGHTENED TENSION.
FRANCE HAS AUGMENTED ITS MILITARY FORCE IN NEIGHBORING
SENEGAL AND HAS BEEN CONDUCTING RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OVER
MAURITANIAN TERRITORY TO COUNTER POSSIBLE POLISARIO THREAT

TO FRENCH COMMUNITY. MOROCCANS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEFENSE TREATY WITH MAURITANIA, HAVE STATIONED THREE BATTALIONS IN MAURITANIA AND APPARENTLY HAVE MORE ON THE WAY. MAURITANIA HAS RECENTLY SOUGHT TO SUPPLEMENT ITS FOREIGN MILITARY ASSISTANCE, NOW PRIMARILY FROM FRANCE AND MOROCCO, (WITH SAUDI FINANCIAL SUPPORT), THROUGH MILITARY ASSISTANCE REQUESTS TO JORDAN AND NOW TO IRAN.

2. US REMAINS NEUTRAL ON SUBSTANCE OF WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE, BUT WE VIEW MAURITANIA'S SITUATION WITH SYMPATHY. WE ARE CURRENTLY IN AN INTENSIVE REVIEW OF OUR SAHARA POLICY AND CERTAIN KEY ISSUES ARE BEFORE THE SECRETARY FOR FINAL DECISION. THE RESULTS OF THIS REVIEW WOULD HAVE A BEARING ON OUR REACTION TO IRANIAN PROVISION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

3. MAURITANIA IS NOT RPT NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FMS PROGRAMS AND, THEREFORE, NOT ELIGIBLE RECEIVE US-ORIGIN EQUIPMENT FROM THIRD COUNTRY TRANSFER. A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION IN EARLY 1976 DID AUTHORIZE ON ONE TIME BASIS ONLY THIRD COUNTRY TRANSFER OF US ORIGIN MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM JORDAN TO MAURITANIA. WE HAVE AUTHORIZED COMMERCIAL PURCHASES BY MAURITANIA OF NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT AND MODEST QUANTITIES OF SMALL ARMS IN THE U.S.

4. PENDING REVIEW OF SAHARA POLICY CITED ABOVE, YOU SHOULD
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INFORM IRANIANS THAT WHILE WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO MAURITANIA, WE ARE NEUTRAL ON SAHARA DISPUTE, AND THAT IN ABSENCE OF US SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH MAURITANIA WE WOULD NOT REPLACE AND/OR FINANCE ANY TRANSFERS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM IRAN'S OWN INVENTORY, REGARDLESS OF ORIGIN. WE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO IRANIAN SALE OR GRANT OF IRANIAN MANUFACTURED SMALL ARMS.

5. YOU MAY ALSO POINT OUT TO IRANIANS, IF IT WOULD BE HELPFUL, THAT ONE AREA WHERE WE HOPE THEY CAN BE OF IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE IS PROVISION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO CHAD IN RESPONSE TO THAT NATION'S DIRECT REQUEST TO IRAN.

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